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Constans cites a passage containing knowledge which he thinks Chaucer could not have obtained from Statius:

'Enfin, il convient de mentionner aussi ce fait que le *Roman de Thèbes* que lit Cryseide (*Tr. and Cr.*, ii, 99 sqq.) donne en tête l'histoire d'Édipe:

This romance is of Thebes that we rede,  
And we have heard that kinge Laius deide  
Through Edippus his sonne, etc.

Nous croyons donc que si Chaucer, dans l'œuvre tout entier de qui déborde l'érudition, a connu la *Thébaïde*, il a connu aussi le *Roman de Thèbes* ou, du moins, une de ses rédactions en prose<sup>1</sup>.

However, this knowledge could have been derived from the *Thebaid* i, 60-68, where Œdipus, addressing Tisiphone, prays:

Si bene quid merui, si me de matre cadentem  
Fovisti gremio et traiectione vulnere plantas  
Firmasti, si stagna peti Cirrhea bicorni  
Interfusa iugo, possem cum degere falso  
Contentus Polybo, trifidaque in Phocidos arto  
Longævum implicui regem secunquie trementis  
Ora senis, dum quaero patrem, si Sphingos iniquae  
Callidus ambages te praemonstrante resolvì.

Other allusions to the death of Laius are found in the *Thebaid* ii, 64 and vii, 355.

There would seem, then, to be no well-grounded reason for asserting that Chaucer was acquainted with one of the versions of the *Roman de Thèbes*.

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#### THE SOURCE OF TENNYSON'S THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

WHY does the story of *The Lady of Shalott* differ so greatly from that of *Lancelot and Elaine* and from Malory? The earliest virtual answer that I find is in Professor Palgrave's *Lyrical Poems by Alfred Lord Tennyson* (1885). He says,

"An Italian romance upon the *Donna di Scalotta*, in which Camelot, unlike the Celtic tradition, was placed near the sea—suggested No. xxix [The Lady of Shalott]. It is under the very different guise of the maid of Astolat that the legend reappears in the *Idylls of the King*." This is the entire note, and the only one on the poem (p. 257, ed. 1899). Subsequent commentators give without criticism the substance of the note—Luce in his *Handbook* making the *lapsus* of ascribing it to Sir Francis Palgrave. John Churton Collins, referring to it, remarks,

"On what authority this is said I do not know, nor can I identify the novel. In Novella lxxxì, a collection of novels printed at Milan in 1804, there is one [I transpose, "In a collection of novels printed at Milan in 1804 (date of vol. i) there is one, Novella lxxxì] that tells, but very briefly, the story of Elaine's love and death . . . and as in this novel Camelot is placed near the sea this may be the novel referred to."<sup>1</sup>

If Mr. Collins could not identify the romance we may assume that the larger British libraries do not contain it. I can say that the libraries of Harvard, Yale, and Cornell have no such romance. Obviously Palgrave had never seen it, or he would have given us something more definite for a title than "An Italian romance upon the *Donna di Scalotta*." If a "romanzo" on that theme is in existence it would be likely to be in the Biblioteca Nazionale at Florence, and I would suggest to literary tourists who may visit that city to search for it in that library, to which foreigners have free access. Through the kindness of the present Lord Tennyson I can say that he believes Palgrave to be right. But where is that romance? and is it likely that a volume that cannot now be found in the great libraries of England and America was accessible to Tennyson in 1832?

In the circumstances, it seems worth while to read carefully the Novella referred to by Mr. Collins. By the kindness of Mr. Kiernan of the Harvard Library I have a copy, which is as follows:—

#### RACCOLTA DI NOVELLE Volume I.

#### NOVELLA LXXXI.

Qui conta come la Damigella di Scalot morì per amore di Lancialotto de Lac.

Una figliuola d'un grande Varvassore si amò Lancialotto de Lac oltremisura, ma elli non le volle donare suo amore; imperciocchè elli l'avea donato alla Reina Ginevra, Tanto amò costei Lancialotto, ch'ella venne alla morte, e comandò, che quando sua anima fosse partita dal corpo, che fosse ardata una ricca navicella, coperta d'un vermiglio sciamito con un ricco letto ivi entro, con ricche, e nobile coverture di seta, ornato di ricche pietre preziose; e fosse il suo corpo messo in su questo letto

<sup>1</sup> *The Early Poems of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 1900, p. 43.

vestito de' suoi più nobili vestimenti, e con bella corona in capo ricca di molto oro, e di molte ricche pietre preziose; e con ricca cintura, e borsa. Ed in quella borsa avea una lettera dello infrascritto tenore. Ma in prima diciamo di ciò, che va dinanzi alla lettera. La Damigella morio del mal d'amore. E fu fatto di lei ciò, che ella avea detto, della navicella senza vela, e senza remi, e senza neuno sopra sagliente, e fu messa in mare. Il mare la guidò a Camelot, e ristette alla riva. Il grido fu per la Corte. I Cavalieri, e Baroni dismontaro de' palazzi, e lo nobile Re Artù vi venne: e maravigliandosi forte molti, che senza niuna guida questa navicella era così apportata ivi. Il Re entrò dentro, vide la Damigella, e l'arnese. Fe' aprire la borsa; trovaro quella lettera. Fecela leggere, e dicea così. A tutti i Cavalieri della ritonda, manda salute questa Damigella di Scalot, siccome alla miglior gente del mondo. E se voi volete sapere perch' io a mio fine sono venuta, cioè per lo migliore Cavaliere del mondo, e per lo più villano, cioè Monsignore Messer Lancialotto de Lac, che già no'l seppi tanto pregare d'amore, ch'elli avesse di me mercede. E così, lassa! sono morta per bene amare, come voi potete vedere.

[Here it is related how the Damsel of Shalot died for love of Lancelot du Lac.

A daughter of a Grandee loved Lancelot du Lac beyond measure, but he would not give her his love for the reason that he had given it to the Queen Guinevere. So much did she love Lancelot that she drew near to death; and she commanded that when her soul should depart from her body, there should be made ready a rich boat covered with red samite, with a rich bed therein, with rich and noble coverings of silk, adorned with rich precious stones; and that her body should be placed upon this bed, clothed in her most noble garments, and with a beautiful crown on her head rich with much gold, and with many rich precious stones; and with a rich girdle and purse. And in that purse was a letter of the tenor written below. But first let us speak of that which went before the letter. The Damsel died of the malady of love. And then was done what she had said, of the boat without sails and without oars, and without anyone on board, and it was put to sea. The sea guided it to Camelot, and it stood at the shore. The news went through the Court. The Knights and Barons came down from their palaces, and the noble King Arthur came thither: and many marveled greatly that without guide this boat

should have been brought thither. The king entered within, saw the damsel and the adornment. He caused the purse to be opened; they found the letter. He had it read, and it said thus: To all the knights that are roundabout, this Damsel of Shalot sends greeting, as to the best people of the world. And if you would know wherefore I have come to my end, it is for the best knight of the world and for the most cruel, that is, Sir Lancelot du Lac, whom indeed I knew not to care enough for love to have pity on me. And so, alas, I die for loving well, as you can see.']

The first impression on reading this is that Tennyson's poem deviates as much from this novella as from Malory. It should be noticed, however, that the first edition of this much-revised poem (1833) resembles the novella more than the second (1842). The first adorns the Lady more splendidly, and mentions crown and girdle,

"A cloud-white crown of pearl she dight  
All raimented in snowy white  
That loosely flew (her zone in sight,  
Clasped with one blinding diamond bright."

The second,

"Lying, robed in snowy white  
That loosely flew to left and right."

The first, like the Novella, does not introduce Lancelot at the final scene.

The first gives the contents of the Lady's letter, but the second makes no allusion to a letter.

"There lay a parchment on her breast,  
That puzzled more than all the rest  
The well-fed wits at Camelot:  
*The web was woven curiously,  
The charm is broken utterly,  
Draw near and fear not—this is I  
The Lady of Shalott.*"

But the poem in both editions has a very different story from the novella. It contains no reference to King Arthur or his Queen. The mirror, the weaving, the curse, the song, the river and island are all absent from the Novella. The circumstances of the Lady's death, the journey to Camelot, the adornment of her person and her boat, and the contents of her letter are quite different. The main bond of connection between novella and poem is that Camelot is made the end of the funeral voyage, and is on the sea-shore. Until, then, some other romance is forthcoming, we must say that Tennyson took what he pleased from Malory, and what he pleased from novella

lxxx. What he added to the story doubtless pleased the fancy of the young poet more than what he took from it. The Arthurian myth was just touched, not for its own sake, as in later work, but as a good setting for a new version of the old theme of Dying for Love. The home-maiden at first sees the world only in the mirror of her imagination, and weaves the web of her fancy. By-and-by comes the sweet but fatal reality.

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#### NOTELETS ON THE CANTERBURY TALES.

*Cant. Tales*, A 3159-3165.—This passage is neither obscure nor irregular, yet Prof. Skeat contributes two notes to the elucidation of the sense and one to that of the metre. Sheer inattention suggests the surprising alternative "or, possibly, an ox (l. 3159)." This may divert the untrained reader from the simple effectiveness of the lines in which the Miller swears, by his oxen, that he will not borrow trouble by groundless assumption or by undue scrutiny. So, too, "sufficient abundance" is rather a hindrance than a help to the understanding of *goddes foyson*; it may turn the mind from the meaning of *goddes* 'God's'. A complete commentary upon this line is furnished in D 39.

Finally a 'headless line,' or one with 'direct attack,' is not metrically "defective"; it represents a permissible variation from the usual line, as Prof. Skeat himself teaches with special emphasis upon his peculiar right to do so (Vol. vi, p. lxxxviii, note 1; see also note to D 869).

*Cant. Tales*, A 3869:

This whyte top wryteth myne olde yeres.

Prof. Skeat comments thus: "I take this to mean—'my old years write (mark upon me) this white head,' that is, turn me grey." But why this wriggle when everything is plain? The line is a fine one and 'reads itself' in straightforward fashion: 'This white head chronicles (writes down in visible characters) my advanced years.' The *constructio pregnantis* of *wryteth* is, of course, not to be overlooked.

*Cant. Tales*, A 3871-3873.—Against the se-

cond line, *That ilke fruit is ever leng the wers*, may be placed the words of Rosalind, "for you'll be rotten ere you be half ripe, and that's the right virtue of the medlar" (*As You Like It* iii, 2, 126). From Furness's edition of the play (p. 146) it may be learned that "Chaucer gives it [the medlar] a very prominent place in his description of a beautiful garden" [see *Rom. of the Rose*, 1375], but the editor has neglected the more important matter. He should have referred back to his first volume, *Romeo and Juliet*, p. 91, and Mercutio's quibbling should have reminded him of the rustic vocabulary of Chaucer's Reeve. This omission is all the more surprising because of the note that directs attention to Chaucer's use of the name *Popering*, on which Mercutio doubles his quibble. The Reeve and Mercutio understand each other when talking of the fruit of the medlar, and this begets a reflection, in the mind of the curious observer, upon the persistence of special words on the lips of such as to "long purples" are wont to give "a grosser name."

*Cant. Tales*, B 1404.—*Qui la? quod he*. The rhythmic 'direct attack' is here effective in making distinct the colloquial accent of *Qui*. The three vocative accents *Qui*, *Peter*, and *I* are characteristic of the line, which is, therefore, not "imperfect at the cæsura" (Skeat).

*Cant. Tales*, B 1436.—The reading *husband* is not to be dismissed as so altogether inapplicable as Prof. Skeat would have it appear. The application would not be "to a housewife." 'Thou hast everything that a husband can provide,' says *this noble Marchant*, according to the report of many good MSS., and so there are two good versions of the line from which to choose.

*Cant. Tales*, C 952-953.—There is an obvious relation between this passage and *Le Roman de la Rose* 7855f., Michel's edition, 1864.

JAMES W. BRIGHT.

#### HERRICK'S INDEBTEDNESS TO BEN JONSON.

It is only within a comparatively short period that the minor works of Jonson have been carefully studied and edited. As Shakespeare's sonnets, overshadowed by his plays, were long forgotten, so Jonson's prose, his